



PSR Handbook
2019-2020

**Ss. Mary & Joseph Catholic Church
Carlinville, Illinois**

Dear PSR Parent,

Welcome to the Parish School Religion (PSR) program! We are thrilled that you have chosen to send your children to our program as a part of passing along the faith to your children. We look forward to getting to know you and your family better and to grow in faith together. Our primary goal and desire (as well as that of this program) is for your family to encounter the Living Christ.

You Matter!

Parents...you are the single greatest influence on the spiritual and religious life of your children. Nothing else even comes close. If you live the faith inside and outside of your home, your children have the greatest opportunity to do the same. In the spiritual and religious development of children, parents are more important than anything else, including peers and media (Notre Dame Study Panel: The National Study of Youth & Religion – Bartkus & Kenan, 2016). We are committed to supporting parents and families in living their faith inside and outside of their homes.

WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

This handbook was created to not only inform you of the policies and procedures which every handbook has, but also the goals of our PSR program and how we intend to live out our commitment to supporting you in passing along the faith to your children. It is our privilege to journey in faith with your family. We look forward to encountering Jesus Christ together.

Fr. Michael B. Haag
Dcn Denny Baker
Karla Huddlestun, DRE

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Goals of the PSR Program

- *Our primary goal is to*
provide every family member the opportunity
to encounter Christ.
- *Our next goal is to*
grow the faith of every family member
after encountering Christ.
- *Our final goal is to*
equip every family member with the tools and desire to
witness Christ so as to offer the same encounter and
opportunity for salvation to the world.

PSR Program Overview

The PSR program will share the faith using:

1. *The Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*

These lessons are based off of Sunday's mass readings.

We are trying to accomplish multiple goals with this program:

1. We are trying to tie in what happens at mass to what we are learning.
2. As we work towards increasing mass attendance, we are proclaiming the Sunday gospel to those who might not have not heard it and reinforcing it to those who have.
3. This changes the order of subjects covered. Two benefits result from this. First, it creates variety in the subjects covered. Second, topics might be covered more than once, reinforcing the teaching.
4. Since these weeklies go home with the child, you will not only be able to know what was taught, but how to reinforce the teaching at home.

2. *The Ecclesial Method of Teaching*

The Ecclesial Method of Teaching has five parts to it:

1. Preparation – prepare the children to receive the Word.
2. Proclamation – proclaim the Word.
3. Explanation – explain the Word – what do we want them to learn?
4. Application – how does this learning get applied to daily life?
5. Celebration – praise God for the Word given to us

Every class will put this method to practice using the Gospel Weeklies so that the children will encounter Christ in the preparation and proclamation. Then they will grow in their love and knowledge of Christ in the explanation and application. Finally, through their celebration and witnessing of their encounter with Christ, they will learn and pass along their faith.

Combined together, the gospel weeklies and the ecclesial method of teaching will be how the children will encounter, grow, and witness to their encounter with Christ, fulfilling the goals of our PSR program.

3. *Guidelines and Resources provided to the Catechists*

Our PSR curriculum will also have guidelines of learning goals and objectives for each grade. These are given to the catechists and are available upon request to the parents. These will detail what we expect each child to learn throughout the year.

Persons Responsible for the PSR Program

1. *Parents*

Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. The PSR program can only succeed if you send your child to PSR. The PSR program complements and is not a replacement for the life of faith in the family. Mass is where we encounter Christ in the Eucharist. Therefore, it is necessary for families to attend mass every Sunday and on Holy Days. Attached are the aspirations we have for our families and the support we are committed to providing you to help live these aspirations out. I invite you to read them and prayerfully consider how you might incorporate these into the life of your family.

2. *Catechists*

Our catechists are volunteers who generously give of their time to share the faith with your children. We appreciate and are grateful for their generosity.

3. *Director of Religious Education*

The Director of Religious Education supports our catechists in passing along the faith to our children. The DRE is responsible for all aspects of the curriculum.

4. *Parent Council*

This is a council of parents whose role it is to identify problems and areas of growth for the PSR program. They are the sounding board for the parents as well as the ones who can explain and support the decisions on the program.

5. *Children*

How our children behave and their attitude toward PSR will help create the environment that will allow all to encounter Christ.

6. *Pastor*

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the PSR program is with the pastor. He will have the final decision in all matters relating to the PSR program.

What to Expect on a Typical PSR Night

Grades K-3 will first check-in and then go to the parish hall. The older grades will go directly to the parish hall; their attendance will be taken in their classroom. Each grade will sit at tables designated for their class. No food or drink will be provided. However, a child may bring food and drink with them and consume it prior to the dismissal to the classrooms.

The night will open with a combined lesson, using Sunday's gospel reading. This will take about five minutes after which the children will be dismissed to their classes with their catechist(s). Attendance will be taken for the older children. The class will then be taught using the structured resources and guidelines. Drinks and/or snacks to be shared amongst the entire class may be provided by the catechist or by one of the parents in the classroom; this is optional.

Five minutes prior to the end of the class, the DRE will inform the catechists of the nearing conclusion of the class. The bell will ring, signifying the end of the class. K-3 will be taken to the parish hall for their parent / guardian to sign them out prior to pick up.

Student Drop Off / Pick Up Policy

When dropping off students, a parent, guardian or caregiver **MUST** check-in students in grades K-3 in the parish hall. Children in grades K-3 will also need to be signed-out prior to leaving. Please note, students in grades K-3 **WILL NOT** be allowed to exit the parish hall without adult supervision (older siblings in PSR grades 6-8 are **NOT** allowed to sign their siblings out). All students should be picked up in a timely manner.

Communication

Ss. Mary & Joseph Catholic Church is making an effort to eliminate using paper where possible. In addition to announcements in the bulletin, we will be using our website www.macoupincatholicchurch.com and our Facebook page, Macoupin Catholic Church, to communicate general information. The PSR schedule will be posted on the website as well as the Facebook page.

Individual class communications as well as PSR-wide updates and messages will be sent via the Bloomz app. The Bloomz app will also provide a forum for parent-to-parent communications and special event sign-ups, as well as a central location for sharing photos and handouts. An invitation to the Bloomz app will be sent to you after you have registered your child. **An email address is required from each registered family in order to facilitate this process!**

Registration & Student Emergency Medical Form

Registration will take place online via <https://goo.gl/forms/QIHxuOoTeR20Ho8W2>. The link is also available on the parish website and Facebook page. On rare occasions your child may become ill during class and require emergency care. Therefore, a completed Registration form is required for EACH PSR STUDENT. Any student without an emergency medical form on file or an incomplete form on file will NOT be permitted in class until a completed form is received.

Weather Conditions/PSR Cancellation Policy

At times attendance may become difficult due to weather circumstances. In the the event of PSR cancellation due to weather conditions, we will make every attempt to communicate cancellations directly through the Bloomz app. If you are unsure if classes are meeting you can always call the parish office at 217-854-7151.

In the event of severe weather during a PSR class, all PSR students and staff will move to a central, safe location in the building. Weather permitting, a staff member will meet parents at the School doors. Students will be released to parents after being signed out with a staff member.

Behavior / Discipline Policy

We feel an atmosphere of respect and appropriate behavior is essential for the best climate to be present in our classrooms and hallways. We expect our children to respect our Catechists and each other and their environment. Catechists and children will set out their own class rules.

If a student is disruptive in class or on the premises, the disciplinary procedure will be: For the first offense, a conversation between the student and the Catechist will take place. Hopefully, this conversation will clear up any misunderstandings and reinforce expected behavior and responsibility. We hope that in most cases this would be sufficient to correct the situation. If there is a second offense, a conversation between the student and the DRE will take place in an attempt to help generate some possible options to improve the situation. If a third offense occurs, a conference will be initiated, including the student, the parent/guardian, and the DRE or Deacon. We are hopeful that a solution can be found that will benefit the student, the adult involved, and the entire program.

Special Events

Every year the PSR program will focus on a certain aspect of our faith. This year, it will be the North American Saints and the Rosary.

Instead of a Christmas play, we will have an Epiphany play. This play will be done during normal PSR class time and after the conclusion of the Christmas break.



Sacraments

First Reconciliation & First Communion

First Reconciliation and First Communion are wonderful moments of faith in the life of our children. To fully prepare our children for this awesome encounter with Jesus, we are going to need your help to prepare your children. Although we expect our candidates for First Reconciliation and Communion to attend PSR and mass during the year, we are also going to ask more from the parents to help their children prepare.

Every family and child will receive two books – *First Reconciliation and Beyond*, and *First Eucharist and Beyond* – to help prepare their children for these sacraments. These books each contain four sessions of activities and discussion starters to share your faith with your child. Once a month – Reconciliation for the first semester and Eucharist for the second semester – the parents and children will be expected to meet as a group during PSR to discuss the session and share their faith with each other and the children. **These meetings are a requirement.** For those who might not be able to make one of the meetings in Carlinville, there will be similar meetings held in Gillespie on Sunday mornings. If one cannot make either of these group meeting times, an individual meeting with the staff of SSMJ will be required.

In addition, since parents are the first teachers of their children in the way of faith, it will be **required** of the Catholic parent(s) to provide good example by going to confession prior to their child celebrating First Reconciliation. A First Communion retreat and First Communion mass will be scheduled.

Confirmation

Bishop Paprocki has desired that the confirmation age be moved to immediately prior to First Communion. This means that confirmation will eventually take place around 3rd grade. This is called the Restored Order because Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist is the order in which the early Church placed the sacraments. This year we will have Confirmation and First Eucharist for the 3rd grade class. The date is pending and will be announced at a later time.

Expectations for Reception of the Sacraments

Expectations for your child receiving sacraments (Confirmation for 7th/8th grade or Confirmation & Eucharist for 3rd grade) in our Tri-Parishes is that you:

- Must be a member of one of the three parishes
- Must be registered and attend PSR the year prior to Sacramental preparation
- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Day of Obligation

Finally,

We have completely changed the PSR program to foster greater participation by the parents and to more effectively form missionary disciples of Christ through Encountering Christ, Growing in Faith, and Witnessing to the Faith. I am asking for your support and help in order to make our PSR program work. Please reinforce the learning and practice of faith at home. Please attend mass. Please volunteer to be a catechist or aide to the PSR program. Together, we can pass along the faith to our children.

*God Bless,
Fr. Michael Haag*